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SUBJECT: POLISH MFA ON MANPADS: RUSSIA CAPITALIZING ON GEORGIAN INCOMPETENCE

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[1B.](#) MOSCOW 3475

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR DAN SAINZ FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)  
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[¶1.](#) (C) SUMMARY: The Polish MFA attributed Russia's alleged October discovery of Polish-made GROM MANPADS in Chechnya (originally delivered to Tbilisi) to Georgia's unprofessional handling of the weapons. The Russians, in turn, capitalized on the discovery to "discredit Poland and Georgia." The MFA speculated that Georgians did not deliberately transfer the MANPADS to Chechnya but mishandled them during the August conflict, allowing Russia possibly to "stage a discovery in Chechnya." An MFA official described the Russian allegations as a "provocation" but noted that Moscow did not raise the issue during bilateral export control talks December 9, which he said went "surprisingly well." END SUMMARY.

[¶2.](#) (C) An MFA Security Department official told us he took part in a Polish fact-finding mission to Georgia at the end of November, which concluded that the Georgians had "majorly (messed) up" in the handling of Polish-made GROMs. In response to Ref A demarche regarding alleged Russian discoveries of GROMs in Chechnya, Maciej Falkowski of the MFA's Security Policy Department told us December 16 that the Poles had been working with the Georgians before the August conflict to ensure that the 100 GROM rockets and 30 launchers were stored in compliance with Wassenaar commitments. When war broke out, however, the Georgians "completely lost their heads," threw the GROMS on trucks, and transported them to the battlefield. According to Falkowski, MANPADS were distributed not only to the minimally trained Georgian military, but also to untrained police and civil defense personnel. He said that in several cases the Georgians rendered the rockets inoperable through misuse. Falkowski said the main lesson for Poland was that countries receiving Polish arms should first be trained how to use them. Nevertheless, Falkowski boasted with a slight smile that the MANPADS "successfully targeted 8-9 flights, despite the incompetent handling."

[¶3.](#) (C) Falkowski emphasized that Russia was attempting to use the incident to "compromise the Georgians" and to discourage Poland from supplying arms to Georgia in the future. The Polish fact-finding mission was able to track down 21 of 30 launchers and 66 of 100 rockets. The Georgian government claimed that an additional 16 rockets had been disabled and sunk in the Kodori River in Abkhazia. Other MANPADS had "likely been abandoned on the spot" as Russian forces advanced. Falkowski said he had no hard intelligence but speculated that "Chechyan members of Russia's 58th brigade probably stumbled upon the MANPADS and shipped them to Chechnya," allowing the Russians to stage a discovery there. He noted that the Russians had claimed in several fora that Poland had not complied with its Wassenaar commitments.

¶4. (C) The Russians, however, did not raise the MANPADS incident during bilateral export control talks that took place December 9 in Moscow in a surprisingly pleasant atmosphere, according to Falkowski. He said Russian negotiators were amenable to revoking 90 percent of the licensing agreements related to obsolete military equipment and shifting discussions to the technical level on the remaining 10 percent related to current manufacturing. Russian technical experts are expected to visit Poland in February 2009 to determine what equipment is based on Russian technology. Falkowski was quick to note that the Polish side could prove that the GROM is based solely on Polish technology and components.

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